(iv) The Income Tax Department is in the process of increasing the manpower to reduce processing time.

(v) The department is in the process of setting up of Centralized Processing Centres for speedy processing of returns.

(vi) Field formations have been directed to process returns having claim of refunds on priority.

(vii) The recent initiatives taken for filing of e-returns would substantially reduce the time taken for processing and consequent issue of refunds.

(c) No specific study has been made to determine the average time taken in . processing of returns. However, based on the past experience in processing of returns and comprehensive computerization, the Department has already issued guidelines to process returns within four months of filing of returns and issue refunds. The statutory time limit to process return of income for the returns received in the financial year 2006-07 is 31.03.2008.

(d) In view of (c) above, doe: not arise.

Procurement of Gas from Myanmar

†*123. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Public Sector Undertakings Gas Authority of India Ltd. and ONGC Videsh have 10 per cent and 20 per cent stake respectively in the gas reserves of Block A 1 and A3 situated in Myanmar;

(b) if not, the details thereof;

. (c) whether it is also a fact that Myanmar had proposed to sell the gas produced from the reserves to India;

(d) if so, the time when this proposal was made and contents of the proposal; and

(e) the reasons for not accepting this proposal?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA): (a) and (b) GAIL & OVL farmed into Al Block on 28th January 2002 with 10% and 20% participating interest respectively. The combine also farmed into A3 Block on 3rd October 2005 with similar participating interest. Daewoo, Korea and KOGAS have a participating interest of 60% and 10% respectively in these blocks. Daewoo, Korea is the operator of the blocks.

(c) to (e) The Government of India has been systematically pursuing the purchase of gas from Myanmar. Government of Myanmar issued a Letter of Intent (LOI) on

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi

11th February, 2004, wherein GAIL was acknowledged as a preferential buyer of gas from these blocks. An MoU to the above effect was signed between the two countries on 9th March 2006. In terms of the provisions contained in the LOI and MoU, GAIL completed a Detailed Feasibility Report (DFR) for an onland pipeline from Myanmar passing through the North Eastern States of India. The highlights of DFR were presented to Myanmar Government and consortium partners on May 3, 2006 at Yangon.

The Myanmar Government invited bids for export of gas on 9th August 2006. GAIL submitted a competitive bid to Myanmar Government. Myanmar Government *vide* their letter dated 2nd October 2006 intimated to the bidders that they were reviewing their decision to sell this gas through pipeline, as the price quoted by different bidders did not meet their expectations. Subsequently, Government of Myanmar invited bids for sale of 3.5 MMTPA of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). GAIL again submitted its bid. The matter was discussed in various meetings held between Government of Myanmar and Consortium between January and March 2007. During a meeting on 10th January 2007 at Nay Pyi Taw (NPT), it was informed by Myanmar Government that a part of gas from these blocks would be used for domestic supply and that export option would be decided only after the completion of the remaining drilling in A-3 block and reassessment of reserves. It was also indicated that export of gas through LNG Project, pipeline to India and pipeline to Thailand were the options under consideration and that pipeline to China was no more under consideration.

However, in the meeting held in February 2007 between Myanmar Government and PetroChina, Myanmar Government decided that the gas from Al and A3 blocks would be sold to China through the pipeline route. This was conveyed by Myanmar Government during a meeting held at Nay Pyi Taw (NPT) on March 16,2007. GAIL impressed upon the other partners and Myanmar Government that GAIL's pipeline offer was still the most competitive and offered optimum value for them due to proximity of India to these fields. However, Myanmar Government's decision to sell the gas to China remains as of now.

Promotion of tourism schemes abroad

*124. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to promote schemes like Medical Tourism, Beach Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Pilgrimage Tourism and Desert Tourism abroad before the commencement of Commonwealth Games in 2010;

(b) if so, the details of Government's plan; and

(c) the total amount earmarked for promotion of tourism activity before the Games? *

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Tourism promotes a number of themes including Medical Tourism, Beach Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Pilgrimage Tourism and Desert Tourism in the overseas market through print, TV, Internet and Outdoor Media. In addition,